Listing of claims:

1 (currently amended): A method for representing non-structured features in a ML document, comprising:

determining a start feature tag location for a non-structured feature; wherein the non-structured feature spans a range that begins at a location that is after a start tag of an outer element and before an end tag of the outer element;

determining an end feature tag location for the non-structured feature; wherein the [[non-structure]]non-structured feature spans the range beginning at a location associated with the start feature tag location and ends at a location associated with the end feature tag location; wherein the range encompasses other tags in the ML document that ends at a location that is after the end tag of the outer element;

placing a start feature tag at the start feature tag location; wherein the start feature tag is an empty tag that does not include other elements and the start feature tag includes a start identifier attribute; and

placing an end feature tag at the end feature tag location, wherein the end feature tag is an empty tag that does not include other elements and the end feature tag includes an end identifier attribute; and wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag are separated by the range while maintaining a well formed ML document[[.]];

determining a reference value, the reference value indicating an association between the start feature tag and the end feature tag;

setting the start identifier attribute to the reference value; and

setting the end identifier attribute to the reference value.

2 (canceled)

3 (canceled)

4 (currently amended): The method of Claim [[2]]1, wherein the ML document is an XML document.

5 (currently amended): The method of Claim [[3]]4, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag that span other elements are named differently.

6 (currently amended): The method of Claim 5, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag ~~are bookmarks~~ represent a bookmark.

7 (currently amended): The method of Claim 6, further comprising, using the bookmark[[s]] ~~to create~~ in an index of a set of documents.

8 (currently amended): The method of Claim 5, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag ~~may be~~ are used for at least one function selected from a set comprising: annotating, proofing, range protection, commenting, and permissions.

9 (currently amended): A computer-readable medium for representing non-structured features that span other tags in a ML document, comprising:

determining locations for a start feature tag and an end feature tag; wherein a [[non-structure]]non-structured feature spans a range beginning at a location associated with the start feature tag location and ~~ends~~ ending at a location associated with the end feature tag location; wherein the start feature tag location is within a first ~~other tag~~ element and outside a second ~~tag~~ element while the end feature tag is located within a second ~~tag~~ element and outside the first ~~tag~~ element while adhering to a well formed ML rule; and

placing the start feature tag and the end feature tag at the determined locations, wherein ~~the start feature tag and the end feature tag are empty tags.~~ at least one of the start feature tag and the end feature tag includes an attribute identifier that indicates an association between the start feature tag and the end feature tag.

10 (canceled)

11 (currently amended):   The computer-readable medium of Claim ~~10~~9, wherein the ML document is an XML document.

12 (previously presented):   The computer-readable medium of Claim 9, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag each include an attribute that is set to a same value indicating the association between the start feature tag and the end feature tag.

13 (currently amended):   The computer-readable medium of Claim 12, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag are represent a bookmark[[s]].

14 (currently amended):   The computer-readable medium of Claim 12, further comprising, using the bookmark[[s]] to create in an index of a set of documents.

15 (previously presented):   The computer-readable medium of Claim 11, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag may be used for at least one function selected from a set comprising: annotating, bookmarking, proofing, range protection, commenting, and permissions.

16 (currently amended):   A system for representing non-structured features in a ML document, comprising:

an application that is configured to:

parse a word-processor document;

determining determine locations for a start feature tag and an end feature tag; wherein a [[non-structure]]non-structured feature spans a range beginning at a location associated with the start feature tag location and ends at a location associated with the end feature tag location; wherein the range encompasses multiple other tags in the ML document; and

placeing place a start feature tag and an end feature tag at the determined locations, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag are empty tags; wherein the location of the start feature tag indicates a starting position for a non-structured feature and the location of the end feature tag represents an ending position for the non-structured feature; and wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag are not located within the same ML tag element while adhering to a well formed ML rule; and wherein the non-structured feature spans the other tags within the ML document;

determine an identifier indicating an association between the start feature tag and the end feature tag;

place a start attribute within the start feature tag, the start attribute comprising the identifier;

place an end attribute within the end feature tag, the end attribute comprising the identifier;

output the ML document that may be interpreted by applications that understand a ML; and

a validation engine configured to validate the ML document.

17 (canceled)

18 (currently amended):   The system of Claim 1[[0]]6, wherein the ML document is an XML document.

19 (previously presented):   The system of Claim 18, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag may be used for at least one function selected from a set comprising: annotating, bookmarking, proofing, range protection, commenting, and permissions.